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1855 Welsh Baptist Association 1955

Of

Northeastern Pennsylvania

Pa. 1855-1955

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- - Introduction - -

This history of our Welsh Baptist Association of Northeastern Pennsylvania is dedicated in loving memory to Reverend W. F. Davies, Scranton; Dr. T. T. Richards, Scranton; Mr. J. D. Phillips, Scranton; and Reverend Gomer Evans, Wilkes-Barre; whose written words have been so greatly appreciated for furnishing guidance in the compiling of this account.

We are also appreciative of the kindness of Dr. Edward George Hartmann, Associate Professor of History, Suffolk University, Boston, for furnishing us with data on the various churches, and for serving as editor of this history. His evaluation of the Welsh Baptist Contribution to America is included in this booklet.

Our deep appreciation and thanks go also to Reverends James V. Lewis, W. A. R. Gilbride, and Thomas H. Jones, and to all, who by their writings or spoken words, have made this account possible.

We also thank the clerks of our various churches for their cooperation in providing the histories of the individual churches which form a part of this, our present Welsh Baptist Association of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Reverend Thomas H. Jones,
John Gaughan,
Llewellyn Lewis.
Historical Committee

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History

Welsh Baptist Association of Northeastern Pennsylvania

For two thousand years Christianity has been a molding influence in the world; it has been able to sustain by faith in the Unseen, men who otherwise would have faltered. It started out in an obscure corner of the world among a few unlettered men and women worshipping an unknown and crucified Dreamer and Teacher. Yet, in spite of the hostility of the Jewish religious leaders and the might of the Roman Empire, it grew, until at last, it conquered heathenism, and brought pagan Rome to its feet. It waged a relentless war against sin in all its forms. It infused new blood into a dying civilization. Its teaching was rooted in love, and its philosophy centered in freedom. It was a religion of brotherly love, an evangel of hope, and a gospel of faith, which went forth to conquer and transform the world into its own likeness. It possessed a courage too strong to know defeat. It was, and still is, the Christianity of Christ, the living Son of God, and we as Welsh Baptists have always lived and proclaimed the gospel message. It is the message which emphasizes freedom of conscience, complete independence of the indivdual congregation, and recognition of only two ordinances; baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper.

We, as a Welsh people, have a great heritage. Our people have come from the land of song and revival. They brought with them to America a great faith and a great tradition, which has always been passed on to those who followed them. We are proud of the great contribution which our people have made to America. The names of great Welsh-Americans have stood out in flaming letters across the pages of time. William Penn was such a one. So, too, were Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, Abraham Lincoln, Calvin Coolidge, all Presidents of the United States. There were Daniel Boone, the frontiersman; Robert Morris, the financier of the Revolution; Gouverneur Morris, the diplomat; Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris, William Floyd and Button Gwinnett, all signers of the Declaration of Independence; John Marshall and Charles Evans Hughes, Chief Justices; Elihu Yale, benefactor of Yale University; Daniel Webster and William H. Seward, Secretaries of State; John L. Lewis and

William Green, labor leaders; David Rittenhouse and Oliver Evans, inventors; William Dean Howells, Edgar Lee Masters and Ben Ames Williams, authors; Frank Lloyd Wright, architect; J. Pierpont Morgan, Benjamin Fairless and Gwilym Alexander Price, business leaders. These are but a few distinguished Americans of Welsh blood, and many more could be added to the list. As Baptists we like to claim the great Roger Williams, who, although of London birth may have been of Welsh extraction. It is this great American who championed freedom of conscience, separation of church and state, and other attitudes which reflect Welsh liberalism.

This year we celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the formation of our religious organization, the Welsh Baptist Association of Northeastern Pennsylvania. Its roots go back to 1830 when the first Welsh miners began to be attracted to the anthracite coal fields, then being opened up. Soon, enough Welsh Baptists had settled in the region for churches to be organized; at Pottstville in 1832, Carbondale in 1833, and at Minersville in 1835. These were but the pioneer churches, which were joined by others as more and more Welsh miners came into the coal fields to seek employment.

Our Welsh Baptist brethern of the older Oneida County, New York settlement, had already organized a Welsh Baptist Gymanfa or Association, and issued cordial invitations to the newly organized Pennsylvania chapels to join with them annually in gatherings for prayer and song. It was agreed that meetings would alternate yearly between the two states. Despite the great distances, representatives from the mining areas went up for the annual conferences, and those from the New York areas came down. For a time the Pennsylvania Welsh Baptist churches formed a part of the New York Gymanfa.

By 1854, however, enough Welsh Baptists had settled in the mining districts of Pennsylvania to encourage the setting up of a separate association of their own. New churches had sprung up at Danville, Scranton, Summitt, Hill, Pittston, Saint Clair and elsewhere, to encourage the move. Acordingly, at the New York conference of 1854 the advisability of forming a separate association was discussed and agreed upon. Steps were taken to organize the new association, and on Saturday afternoon, December 22, 1855, delegates from the various churches met at Scranton and organized what was then called the Eastern Pennsylvania Gymanfa, but what is now known as the Welsh Baptist Association of Northeastern Pennsylvania. At that meeting it was unanimously resolved 'That this Association is of the same opinion as the brethern in Wales, upon the fundamental questions of religion, as set forth by them in their Associa-

tional letters to the churches annually. Our unity with the Welsh Baptist churches of the homeland upon doctrine and polity, was thus firmly cemented.

After organization was completed, preaching commenced Saturday evening at six o'clock. Sunday was devoted to morning prayer at eight o'clock, with preaching services at ten, two and six o'clock. Meetings were held on Monday and Tuesday (Christmas Day) with preaching at the same hours. The sessions were then moved to Carbondale and continued for two more days. Reverends J. P. Harris, (Ieuan Ddu) then of Minersville, and William Morgan of Pottsville, had the honor of delivering the final sermons. All such preaching had been in Welsh except one sermon in English delivered by Reverend Isaac Bevan of Reading, at the Sunday afternoon session. The first session of the Association closed, having elected Reverend John W. James, then of Scranton, as tis first having elected Reverend John W. James, then of Scranton, as its first one session of the Association has met annually ever since.

During this period the membership of the Association was composed exclusively of immigrants from Wales. They had brought with them their native language in which they worshipped together. Their strongly religious nature was reflected in their general modes of life. The church became the great nucleus which bound them together. Trained under the powerful ministry of their pastors in the homeland and nurtured in the bosom of the Sunday School, they possessed an intelligent grasp of Christian doctrines and held firm convictions of what constituted the truth.

Times were difficult, wages were low, money was scarce. In the face of the most formidable difficulties they organized their churches and them kept then going by toiling hard and sacrificing much. Meetings were held at first in homes of members, but in due time enough money had been raised to construct the first little chapels. In time, these were outgrown and replaced with more substantial edifices. Their pastors were men of outstanding ability. A fervid eloquence, added to a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, made them masters of the pulpit. What a pity that we do not have in our possession, specimens of these early sermons. Who would not be delighted to hear that memorable sermon by Reverend Theophilus Jones, based upon Paul's defense before Agrippa, which so inspired P. P. Bliss, that he went home and wrote the famous hymn 'Almost Persuaded'? Or to read that notable sermon preached by the Reverend David Rees Jones of Plymouth, at an open air meeting at Edwardsville, when, according to contemporary accounts, he swayed his audience as a field of grain moves to the breeze. There were mighty

preachers then, whose sermons would honor any anthology of pulpit gems. Included among them were William Morgan, Pottsville; Charles Jones, Nanticoke; Allen J. Morton; and Dr. Fred Stone. We honor the memory of these and other great leaders of days gone by. We also honor those noble men who trudged the hills and dales to minister to their scattered flocks. Their dole was slim, their labor difficult, but despite all, they remained faithful to their sacred trust, for they loved the work which they were 'called out' to do. Stalwart too, were the laymen of those days who never thought it too much to walk long distances to hold prayer meetings at places, where, since then, flourishing churches have grown.

Accurate statistics are lacking concerning the strength of the Association during these early days, but Reverend W. F. Davies of Scranton, in his account of the Association's first fifty years, estimated the membership to be 450 or 500. As more and more Welsh people arrived, membership grew to 904 by 1858. The decade of the 1860's saw many more arriving, and by 1872 the membership numbered 2,021 persons. It continued to gain through the years until it reached 3,382 in 1885. It declined somewhat after that for a short time, then began climbing again until it reached its highest record of 4,483 members in 1915. According to the available data, the greatest number of baptisms in any one year took place in 1914, at which time 786 persons were baptized into membership of the various churches. The number of churches in the Association has varied over the years. New churches were organized nearly every year in the 1870's and 1880's. From the original twelve which formed the Association, the number had grown to twenty-five by 1872, and by 1884, the peek year in so far as the number of member churches was concerned, the Association was made up of thirty-six churches, nineteen settled pastors, four ministers without charges, seven students preparing for the ministry and six licentiates.

Since 1855, some forty-four churches have become defunct or have joined other associations. Some of the churches were very short-lived. In these cases, the Welsh miners stayed in the neighborhood for just a few years, then left to go where working conditions were better. The little chapels that they had organized were then disbanded. In other cases, the depleting of coal deposits in certain areas forced them to move elsewhere, which had devastating effects upon the Welsh Baptist churches in those areas. This acounts for the disappearance of once strong churches such as Carbondale, Pottsville and St. Clair. In still other instances, the growth of new English speaking generations led to secession of some churches from our Association and their affiliation with English-speaking associations. Today, our Association numbers twelve churches with

an approximate membership of 2,110, twelve ordained ministers, and two licentiates. Baptisms into membership of our churches average ninety each year, while deaths average about forty-four.

The Association became a corporation when it received its charter in 1887, issued by Judge Stanley Woodward of the Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County on August 24, 1887. The following trustees of the Association signed the charter: Evan J. Thomas, Drifton; T. D. Grifiths, Saint Clair; Benjamin Hughes, Hyde Park, Scranton; Evan Rowlands, Wilkes-Barre; and William James Richards, Warrior Run. Meetings were held quarterly for many years, then changed to semi-annually, and after 1918, to annually. The last semi-annual meeting was held in Parsons, that same year. It became the custom to select the pastor of the church at which the annual meetings were held, to serve as moderator for the year. In 1885, it was decided to elect a moderator and vice moderator annually, the vice moderator of one year to become moderator the next year. The arrangement of a minister and a layman alternating each year, continued until 1941, when it was decided that a minister would serve one year and laymen serve the next two years.

The Association's sessions were held entirely in the Welsh language until the twentieth century. Then as the various churches, introduced English and restricted the use of Welsh, the Association did the same. Minutes of the Association were published at first in Welsh only, then in both languages, but after 1913 in English.

The Association in its early years took deep interest in all the missionary, educational and benevolent enterprises of the Northern Baptist Convention. No church ever existed in those days that did not devote the first Monday evening of each month, to pray for, and to speak on, missions. At the Centennial of Missions held in 1892, the churches raised one thousand dollars for the work, and five members of the Association were made life members of the Baptist Missionary Union. The Welsh Home Mission Society of the Association was permanently organized at the annual meetings held in Nanticoke in 1882. It was set up for the purpose of helping weak churches of the Association. The Women's Missionary Society as we know it today, was organized in 1912 and the same year was endorsed as a participating department of the Association. Two years later in 1914, it received a permanent place in the programs of the annual meetings.

Down through the years the Association has tried to help weak churches among its own membership as well as sending out money to assist in the work of missions both home and abroad. Missionary contributions have shown a marked and notable increase in recent years. Each

church has its missionary group actively at work in sponsoring interest in this enterprise. Thanks to the good work of these groups there has been a steady increase in missionary giving and an increased interest in the missionary work of the denomination. Missionary gifts for the year 1953-54 amounted to $7,029.07. An additional sum of $380.00 was raised for the work of the Baptist Orphanage at Philadelphia. Since 1939 a special Sunday of each year is set aside as 'Orphanage Sunday', at which time interest in the orphanage is emphasized and a special collection taken for its support.

Evangelism has always enjoyed a prominent place in the program of the Association and its churches. Its special committee on Evangelism, burning with zeal for God and the desire to see souls saved, recommended in 1906, that the noted evangelist, Reverend R. B. Jones of Porth, who had been very active in the Welsh Revival, be invited to come to America to conduct a series of revival meetings in the churches of the Association. He was given an invitation, arrived in 1907, and conducted services in all the churches, to which great accessions were made. Similar good work was done the following year by Reverend W. S. Jones of Llwynpia, with the result that the churches were greatly deepened in the work of the Master. Revival meetings were held in Wilkes-Barre in 1913, and in Scranton in 1915, by Reverend William (Billy) Sunday, which were a great help to the churches of Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties, resulting in a large increase in the number of baptisms during that time. Our reports show that in 1913 in our various churches, there were 740 baptisms; in 1914, 786; and in 1915, 370; which could be directly attributed to the evangelistic campaigns we have mentioned.

The spiritual welfare of our young people has likewise been of paramount interest to the Association. The Baptist Young People's Union, now the Baptist Youth Fellowship was organized at a quarterly meeting in Providence, Scranton, November 21 - 26, 1893. The Sunday School Association was organized at the annnual meetings held in the Bethel Church, Wilkes-Barre, May 1903. Both groups held annual meetings until October 3, 1919, when they agreed to hold combined conventions in the future. The first was held at the First Welsh Baptist Church, Scranton, on June 11, 1920. The two organizations have been extremely helpful both to the individual churches and to the Association. The Ladies' Aid Societies and the Sewing Circles of the various churches were recognized in 1924, as branches of the Association and were permitted to elect two delegates to represent them at the annual meetings.

From time to time key resolutions were passed by the Association upon matters of importance which we feel significant enough to call to the attention of our readers. In 1921, a resolution was adopted providing that

memorial services for deceased members be made part of the annual meetings. The first service was held at the Bethel Church, Wilkes-Barre, in 1922. In order to give dignity to the office of Moderator, it was approved in 1925, that our Moderator be invited to attend all receptions or farewell meetings for pastors of the various churches. In 1925, the idea of a 'theme' for the Association's meetings was first adopted, and each year thereafter, a different theme is selected for use in all Associational meetings. A resolution was passed in 1937, providing that a special doctrinal sermon be preached at the Sunday morning service of the annual meetings. The Moderator of the year appoints the minister who is to deliver the sermon. This year our members will be asked to vote on certain changes in Articles eight and nine of the Constitution, governing Christian Ministry and Ordination.

It has been suggested at different times, that we disband and the churches affiliate themselves with neighboring Baptist Associations. Such a proposal was first presented in 1912, then again in 1919, in both cases it being stated that our Association, Wyoming and Abington Associations, were over-lapping each other, and that greater good could be accomplished if we were consolidated as proposed. We, believing that great good can be done, and is being done through the Welsh Baptist Association, have consistently refused to give up our identity by merging ourselves into other associations. For some years after 1928, this Association did cooperate with the Wyoming and Abington Associations in employing a secretary to represent them in connection with certain common problems. Nothing permanent came of this arrangement, and it was soon dropped.

Remarkable activity has been shown in recent years in the matter of renovations and improvements to our various church properties. Our property valuation is at an all time high. In 1953-54, we had a reported valuation of $777,500.00, with an additional improvement program among the churches for that year, costing $16,473.26. Also during that year, our churches reported $53,680.91 as the total of all church contributions. We note that all but three of our churches provide parsonages for their pastors.

It is usual in an account such as this, to portray all of the good things which have happened during past years, but the trail has not always been plain, nor the road always smooth. Disagreements between different individuals existed and some of them even came before the delegates. Money was difficult to come by, and there were times when officers of the Association had to borrow money from the Trustees to pay the operating expenses. At one time, the Treasurer loaned his own money in or-

der to keep things going. Some churches were unable to maintain themselves, as we have seen. The property of such churches usually reverted to the Association. The church at Mayfield was sold by the Trustees in 1911, for $850.00; the Minersville church in 1918, for $1400.00; that of Danville in 1918, for $1050.00; and as late as 1931, the Memorial church of Scranton was sold to the Knights of Pythias. Funds received through such sales, went into the Trustee's fund.

Our Association has always taken a determined stand for that which is right. During the last days of slavery, we voiced our convictions regarding that great evil, many times, and in no uncertain terms. And, down through the one hundred years of our existence, we have spoken out, time after time, against all public immoralities, such as intemperance and desecration of the sabbath. Through the means of resolutions, forwarded to our Presidents, Congressmen, and public officials of all kinds, we urged reform. Although these resolutions may not always have been effective, yet, because we sent them, the fact was established that this Association stood for certain ideals, and was not afraid to make these ideals publicly known.

Through this one hundred year period, many preachers have labored long and faithfully in the churches. Many young men have gone into training for the ministry and have continued in the Master's service as pastors of churches. Many of our members have been called from their labors, but those that remain, still continue to serve and are doing good work for the Master. Many of the laymen have acted as lay-preachers and have been helpful to weak churches through their consecrated and willing ministrations. Many laymen and women have worked hard and long to help our Association as it has moved down through the years. It is impossible to name them all without setting one higher than another, and perhaps omitting the names of some who did yeoman service in the earlier days. For this reason, we will not name any, but speak glowingly and in loving memory of all those who did so much to help the cause of Christ and His Kingdom through the channels of the Association.

The good accomplished by the past one hundred years of labor cannot be measured by the twelve churches now in membership. It should be measured by the large number of English churches to be found all over Northeastern Pennsylvania which have grown to their present flourishing condition, from seed sown by ministers and members of our Association.

It is not enough to eulogize the past, or to excuse the present, unless we realize that decreasing membership does not make for success. If we continue to decline at the same rate as we have during the past one hun-

dred years, it will be only a short time before the Association will be an organization of the past. This, we can prevent, by realizing that we still have work to do, and as we begin the second hundred years of existence, may we hear the call to duty, to service and to brotherhood.

Let us go forward with Christ, in closer comradeship and richer service.

'May His Name be Honored and Glorified, Forever,

Amen.

FIRST WELSH BAPTIST CHURCH

Edwardsville, Pa.

A Prayer meeting held in the home of Mr and Mrs. David Pritchard, in the fall of 1872, and attended by 18 persons, became the nucleus of what we now call the First Welsh Baptist Church of Edwardsville, Pa. Very soon thereafter, 11 more persons joined this group and continued to hold meetings in the Pritchard home until the spring of 1873. For the next six years, they worshipped in the little Red School House, during which time the Sunday School was organized. The charter was granted in June 1873 and the group became the Baptist Church of Kingston, Pa. In September, 1873, they were received into the Welsh Baptist Association.

A piece of land was purchased on Green Street, ground broken in May 1879, and construction of the church began. The new building was dedicated on December 13th and 14th, 1879. This church was known as the Baptist Church of Kingston until 1884, when part of Kingston and Plymouth Townships were incorporated into a Borough, named Edwardsville. The name of the church was then changed to the First Welsh Baptist Church of Edwardsville.

In 1894, an addition was built to the auditorium and a baptistry constructed. Until this time, the ordinance of baptism had been administered in Toby's Creek and the Susquehanna River. A parsonage was purchased and first occupied in 1928, but the Trustees were authorized to sell the property on August 1, 1947.

Twelve Pastors have served the church since its beginning. They were: Revs. James R. Price, D. Roslyn Davis, Benjamin W. Thomas, E. Waldo James, Degan Williams, A. J. Morton, L. Ton Evans, Henry H. Harris, Emrys Thomas, E. Mona Jones, D. George Harries, and the Present Pastor, Thomas W. Hughes, who has served the church since June, 1931.

ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

Mahanoy City, Pa.

The only available records show that Zion Baptist Church was organized in 1864 with a membership at that time of 62 persons. Records of the Welsh Baptist Association show the church in membership of the Association in 1872.

We have no records which show when or how the church edifice came into being, however, over the years improvements and renovations have been made to the church. A parsonage is provided for use of the Pastor.

The first recorded name of a Pastor of the church was that of Rev. James F. Richards, in 1894. Pastors who have served the church since that time are: Revs. W. D. Thomas, H. C. Williams, T. P. Morgan, George Hague. The church was without a Pastor from 1911 to 1923, but was helped faithfully by Rev. James V. Lewis.

The present Pastor, Rev. Thomas Evans, began his ministry in the church in 1923, and begins this year, his 33rd year of faithful service to the church.

NEBO BAPTIST CHURCH

Nanticoke, Pa.

Prayer meetings were held in private homes and preaching services were held in Grand Tunnel, Slaptown, and Scalpingtown, for some years before any plans were formulated to organize a church. Occasionally prayer and preaching services were held in the Presbyterian Church, then called the 'Brick Church', but more frequently in the 'Old Union Building' on East Main Street. In March or April 1870, a church was organized in this building.

Soon after organization, steps were taken to secure a lot and build a place of worship. A plot of ground was secured from the Susquehanna Coal Company on what was known as Welsh Hill. Stones were gathered for the walls, which were finished in April, 1871. The building was erected and dedicatory services were held on the third Sunday of June, 1871. The cost of the building was over $100.00. Services were held in both English and Welsh, although the church was a member of the Welsh Baptist Association. In 1877, the church became too small and it was necessary to build a new place of worship either for the English speaking or the Welsh speaking people. Lots were drawn, the English speaking group retaining control of the building, promising $600.00 to the Welsh to aid them in building. In 1880-81, the English speaking

group built a new place of worship, and in 1882, the Welsh built the present church building. The first public service was held October 22, 1882; first communion that same day; dedicatory services in November, 1882; and the first baptism, December 18, 1882.

The following Pastors have served the church: Revs. Theophilus Jones, David Davies, J. P. Harris, Wm. F. Davies, Charles Jones, Thos. D. Morris, Jacob E. Davies, David J. Jones, Lewis M. Blackmere and John C. Sorenson. David J. Jones, the present Pastor, returned and began his second ministry on November 1, 1954.

OLYPHANT WELSH BAPTIST CHURCH

Olyphant, Pa.

The Olyphant Welsh Baptist Church was formed in the year 1858 by a group of Welsh settlers. The Sunday School was organized in the home of David J. Powell, in 1859. The Church was organized on November 1, 1859 and in the same month, was received into the Welsh Baptist Association. A charter was granted on January 21, 1882, and signed by the following Trustees: Frederick Lloyd, Rees Morgan, Richard Morris, William Hoskins and Evan Miles.

The small group of original members held Church and Sunday School services in homes and public buildings until the year 1870, when a frame edifice was erected on land donated by the Delaware and Hudson Company. This building was dedicated on June 16, 1872. The edifice was enlarged in 1888, and a baptistry was built in the platform of the main auditorium.

The building was destroyed by fire on March 20, 1891, but ground was soon broken for a new church building on October 28, 1891; then on March 20, 1892, the present church building was dedicated. During the re-building period, services were held in the Central School Building, the F. M. Opera House, and the Welsh C. M. Church. Many improvements have been made over the years including a parsonage which was built in 1922 at a cost of $7000.00.

The following Pastors have served the church: Revs. Philip L. Davies, Benjamin Bowen, Edward Jenkins, D. T. Evans, Thomas Evans, John A. Evans, George Hague, James V. Lewis, Thomas C. Evans, W. R. Prosser, Nathan T. Lewis, Edward Cuthbert, Elias Jones, Floyd Van Valkenburg, and Cortland R. Bryant.

THE WELSH BAPTIST CHURCH OF LAUREL RUN

Parsons, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

In 1869, three men met in the office of the No. 3 Colliery, Hudson Coal Company, and formed a church. Services were first held in the old school house on Mill Street. Six men, William McGregor, Thomas Armstrong, Elias Hughes, John John, James Armstrong, and John B. Griffith, who became the first Trustees, petitioned the Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County, for articles of incorporation. A charter was granted on March 1, 1870, and the church became The Welsh Baptist Church of Laurel Run, Parsons, Pa.

A site at 21 Hollenback Avenue, now known as Austin Avenue, was procured, and the first church building was completed in 1871. This church was destroyed by fire on April 24, 1907. Re-building was begun and completed by the end of 1908. Services were held during this period in the old Welsh Congregational Church, then situated on Oliver Street.

Over the years many additions have been made to the building, and a parsonage was purchased at 148 Gardner Street. Again the church building was destroyed by fire on the night of February 4, 1925, and immediately, the work of cleaning up the debris, and re-building was begun. The corner stone of the new building was laid on Sunday afternoon, August 2, 1925, while the dedication of the new building was held June 27, 1926.

The following Pastors have served the church: Revs. James Reese, Jonathan Edwards, David Davis, J. S. Jones, D. T. Phillips, W. D. Thomas, J. M. Lloyd, M. H. Jones, R. E. Williams, W. R. Evans, C. O. Fuller, G. C. Walters, E. P. Brown, K. S. Meade, Milo D. Singer, and the present Pastor, Willard F. Edmunds, who began his pastorate in 1944.

FIRST WELSH BAPTIST CHURCH

Plymouth, Pa.

As early as 1865, a number of Welsh Baptist people settled in Plymouth, but failing to find a Baptist Church, they united with the Welsh Congregational Church. Some, however, retained membership in the Welsh Baptist Church of Providence, Scranton. The first step towards the establishment of a church, was the organization of a Sunday School on January 17, 1868. Then on July 25th and 26th, 1868, the little band of men and women were organizd into a church. Their meeting place

was an old school house near the Washington Breaker. The method of illumination for the evening services was by candle light; the candle-holders being made by driving two nails into the wall and placing the candle between them.

The first call to a regular Pastor was given to Rev. W. D. Morgan on October 19, 1868, at which time the membership was 22 members. The first baptism was held in April, 1869. While the young minister and congregation were planning to build a church, disaster struck on September 6, 1869, when the Avondale Breaker was destroyed by fire and 108 men perished in the mine. Ten of these victims were members of this small band. Because of this catastrophe, the minister was forced to find employment in a store, preaching on Sundays and doing what pastoral work he could, in his now limited time.

A lot was purchased in 1870, about 200 yards from the present building, and a brick church erected upon it. Dedicatory services were held in August, 1871. This building was destroyed by fire in 1875. A hall was then rented for meetings until the end of 1876, when the present building was completed. The Powell Squib Factory explosion in 1889 claimed the lives of 11 persons, three of whom were members of the church.

Over the years, renovations and additions have been made to the church, and in 1922, the property next to it on Girard Avenue, was purchased to be used as a parsonage.

The following Pastors have served the church: Revs. W. D. Morgan, Edward Jenkins, David Rhys Jones, Jacob E. Davies, D. Roslyn Davis, W. J. Morgan, E. Mona Jones, W. B. Jones, D. C. Evans, Fred L. Shiffer, W. A. R. Gilbride and the Present Pastor, Elwood G. Johnson, who began his ministry on February 14, 1954.

WEST MARKET BAPTIST CHURCH

Scranton, Pa.

Many Welsh people came into this area as early as 1800, and in 1802 a man by the name of Elder John Miller settled in the rural areas of the Abingtons and to him may be attributed much of the strength of the Baptist denominations in this part of the State.

Twenty Eight Welsh people from what was then known as Providence, Pa. gathered together in the Notch School House, in 1864, and organized the First Welsh Baptist Church of Providence, which later became known as the West Market Street Welsh Baptist Church of

THEME — *"A Century of — WHAT?"*

Acts 10:38 — "He Went About Doing Good."

One Hundredth
Annual Meetings

Of The

Welsh Baptist Association

BAPTIST YOUTH FELLOWSHIP
SUNDAY SCHOOLS

And

WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

Of

NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

At The

Bethel Welsh Baptist Church

Friday — Saturday — Sunday

May 13, 14, 15, 1955

OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Moderator.....Harold Davis, Olyphant, Pa.
Vice Moderator.....Rev. W. G. Edmunds, Parsons, Pa.
Secretary.....Llewellyn Lewis, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.
Treasurer.....Elmer R. Edwards, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Reception Committee

Mrs. Gomer Evans, Mrs. Harry G. Thomas

Program

FRIDAY AFTERNOON — 2:00 P.M.

Baptist Youth Fellowship and Sunday Schools

MR. EDWARD FIELDING, *Presiding*

Song Service.....Ralph Evans, Chorister
Call To Worship.....Sandra Jones, Bethel Baptist Church
Scripture.....Benjamin Roberts, Jr., Bethel Baptist Church
Prayer.....Janet Gibbon, Bethel Baptist Church
Address Of Welcome.....Mrs. Agnes Robinson, Bethel Baptist Church
Response.....Harry White, Scranton
Roll Call Of Officers — Roll Call Of Delegates
Reading Of Minutes — Report Of District Officers
Unfinished Business — New Business
Report Of Nominating Committee — Election Of Officers
Musical Selection
Address.....Rev. Roland Wroten, Scranton
Offering — Offertory Prayer.....Rev. Milo D. Singer, Wilkes-Barre
Hymn
Benediction.....Rev. Wroten

FRIDAY AFTERNOON — 5:30 P.M.

Baptist Young People's Banquet

Song ..... America
Invocation.....Edward Fielding, Edwardsville
Welcome.....Elvira Panaway, Parsons
Toastmaster.....Daniel Jones, Scranton
Dinner — Women Of Bethel Baptist Church
Choruses.....Ralph Evans, Chorister
Musical Selection.....Parsons B. Y. F.
Introduction Of Present Officers
Reading.....Taylor B. Y. F.
Selection.....Plymouth B. Y. F.
Humorist.....Mr. Lovering, Plains
Musical Selection.....Bethel B. Y. F.
Introduction Of New Officers
Selection.....West Market Street B. Y. F.
Song
Benediction

FRIDAY EVENING — 8:00 P.M.

Song Service.....Ralph Evans, Chorister
Devotions.....Parsons Baptist B. Y. F.
Special Selection
Offering — Offeratory Prayer.....Rev. William James, Warrior Run
Hymn
Address.....Miss Ruth Swenk, Director Youth For Christ, Pottsville
Hymn
Installation Of Officers.....Rev. Milo D. Singer, Wilkes-Barre
Hymn
Benediction.....Miss Swenk

SATURDAY MORNING — 9:30 A.M.

MR. HAROLD DAVIS, *Moderator*

9:30 a.m. Moderator's Prayer Service
10:00 a.m. Hymn
Scripture and Prayer.....Rev. Elwood G. Johnson, Plymouth
Roll Call Of Delegates
Address Of Welcome.....John Dumble, Bethel Baptist Church
Response.....Joseph J. Dower, Shenandoah
Report Of Credentials Committee, Welcome To New Ministers
Invitation To Visitors, Rules Of Procedure,
Reading Of Church Letters.
Election Of Officers

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Christian Stewardship, Denominational Literature, Social Movements, Denominational Progress, Baptist Institute and Orphanage, Examining Committee, Pastoral Changes, Laymen's Council, Evangelism, Press, Camp Keystone, Arrangements, Sunday Schools and B. Y. F., Missionary Societies, One Hundredth Anniversary, Statistical, Missionary Committee, Chairman Children's Work.
Member - State Nominating Committee —
Member - State Board Of Managers
Missionary Address
Hymn
Benediction

SATURDAY AFTERNOON — 2:00 P.M.

Hymn
Memorial Service.....Rev. Thomas H. Jones, Dalton
2:30 p.m. Four conferences will be held under the direction of State Convention Officers.
3:30 p.m. Reports — Treasurer - Trustees - Auditors
Unfinished Business
Payment Of Bills
Incoming Moderator's Address and Appointments
Report Of Resolution Committee
New Business
Place Of Meeting
Hymn
Benediction

SATURDAY EVENING — 7:00 P.M.

Noson Lawen

Hymn
Devotions.....Rev. Willard Edmunds, Parsons
Service of Song...Conducted by Mr. & Mrs. Al Williams, Scranton
Offering-Offeratory Prayer...Rev. Thomas A. Thomas, W-Barre
Hymn
Benediction

SUNDAY MORNING — 9:30 A.M.

9:30 a.m. Prayer And Praise Service.....Richard J. Jones, Leader
10:30 a.m. Hymn
Scripture And Prayer.....Rev. William James, Warrior Run
Selection.....Bethel Junior Choir
Announcements — Offering
Hymn
Doctrinal Sermon.....Rev. Thomas W. Hughes, Edwardsville
Hymn
Benediction

SUNDAY AFTERNOON — 2:00 P.M.

Missionary Meeting

MRS. PHILIP BUFTON, *Presiding*

Hymn
Devotions
Memorial Service
Announcements — Offering
Hymn
Benediction

SUNDAY AFTERNOON — 3:00 P.M.

Combined Meeting of Missionary Societies, Laymen's Council And Young People.
Meade Street Baptist Church
Historical Pageant depicting important events in life of our Association under direction of Rev. Willard Edmunds, Parsons

SUNDAY EVENING — 6:00 P.M.

Song Service.....Richard J. Jones, Leader
Scripture And Prayer.....Rev. Milo D. Singer
Selection.....Bethel Senior Choir
Announcements — Offering
Hymn
Sermon.....Rev. David J. Griffith, First Baptist Church Mansfield, Pa.
Communion Service.....Rev. Milo D. Singer with Guest Ministers
Hymn
Benediction

MEALS WILL BE SERVED

Friday Evening.....4:30 P.M.
Saturday.....12:30 P.M. and 5:00 P.M.
Sunday.....12:00 Noon and 4:30 P.M.

Resrvations may be made with the entertaining church for those staying overnnight.

Scranton, Pa. Richard Harris and John P. Lewis were the first deacons of the church, and William Hughes, was the first Sunday School Superintendent.

Dissatisfied after meeting for two years in the school house, the membership decided to buy a lot closer to the center of the town. A lot was purchased for $300.00 in 1866, and a church edifice built on the present site. Rev. John Evans came from Wales to be its first Pastor and the church soon became one of the leading churches in this part of the town.

The following Pastors have served the church: Revs. John Evans, Vaughn Davis, Thomas Lewis, Jacob Davies, John Morris, Thomas Price, W. F. Davis, D. C. Edwards, J. C. Jones. The present Pastor, Thomas H. Jones, began his ministry in 1945.

FIRST WELSH BAPTIST CHURCH

Shenandoah, Pa.

The First Baptist Church was organized January 28, 1867. Previous to that time, services had been held in the various homes. The number of members increased and they secured the use of the old Brown School House on the site of the present Lincoln school at Lloyd and West Streets.

The Welsh people of the Baptist, Congregational and Calvinistic Methodist denominations united in these services, but as the number of people of each denomination grew, each, arranged for services of its own. The membership in 1867 - 68 included many of the prominent men of the town at the time, and many immigrants from Wales, who worked as coal miners.

The first Pastor was Rev. David Evans, from whom, the site of the present church was purchased for $50.00. Many improvements have been made to the church. In 1905, it was completely remodeled. Again in 1916, the interior was remodeled and a gift of new windows were made. The church was re-dedicated on Sunday, January 7, 1917. In 1925, the Sunday School room was remodeled and in 1930, the kitchen and furnace room as well. The church was badly damaged by fire on February 28, 1938, to the extent of $1000.00.

Rev. David Evans was the first Pastor, followed by: Revs. H. G. James, Joseph Jones, Moses Wright, (called but died before he was installed), David Jones, D. S. Thomas, David Ivor Evans, W. B. Jones, A. J. Cook, George W. L. Moody, Russel A. Pavy, George A. Kevorkian, Josiah H. Rhoads, Harold Bater, and William E. Cox.

FIRST WELSH BAPTIST CHURCH

Taylor, Pa.

On February 27, 1869, a band of God fearing Welsh settlers met in a carpenter shop of the Taylorville mines, D. L. & W. Coal Company, and organized the First Welsh Baptist Church of Taylorville, now known as Taylor, Penna., and were received into the Welsh Baptist Association in September of that year.

Religious services were held in a one room school on South Main Street opposite the old Memorial Cemetery for some time until a tract of land was secured from the D. L. & W. Coal Company upon which the church was built. Many of the early members were baptized in a creek near the Taylor Railroad station, it being impossible to have a baptistry in the church, due to an inadequate water system in the town.

Between 1888 and 1890 a dissention arose in the church over the constant use of the Welsh language and many people left and formed an English Baptist Church, now known as the Calvary Baptist Church, reducing the membership from 305 to 146. Within two years many of them returned.

Many improvements have been made to the church over the years, the most recent begun in September, 1951, included a complete renovation of the old church building with many additions to it.

Three of our young men have gone forth into the full time ministry; Morgan Watkins, Charles Emory, and Clarence Howells.

The folowing Pastors have served the church: Reverends D. Roslyn Davis, D. W. Morris, Charles Jones, Rev. Thomas, J. M. Lloyd, D. C. Edwards, Wm. D. Reese, James V. Lewis, William J. Morgans, Eleazer Davis, Kenneth L. Garrison, David Morris and Donald D. Stout.

THE FIRST WELSH BAPTIST CHURCH

Warrior Run, Pa.

The first services were held in the home of Mrs. Gaynor Lloyd on Orchard Street, August 1883, led by Rev. Wm. F. Davies, Pastor of Nebo Baptist Church, Nanticoke, Pa. A formal organization meeting was then held in October, 1883, by 13 persons who had obtained their letter of dismissal from Nebo Baptist Church. The new congregation was admitted into membership of the Welsh Baptist Association in August, 1884.

For a time, services were held in Pearson's Hall, until the church was built on a piece of land leased from the D. L. & W. Coal Company in 1887; the land was later purchased outright and the deed recorded August 24, 1907. The church was dedicated December 20, 1891.

Baptismal services were held occasionally in what was known as the lower dam, which was used as a water supply for the Warior Run Colliery, as well as in the creek at Askam. The first baptism took place in February, 1883; a hole having been chopped in the thick ice before the people could be baptized. Members had to walk one mile to the nearest house after being baptized. This was eliminated by the construction of a baptistry in the auditorium of the church.

The church was damaged severely by subsidence and mine stripping operations in August, 1950, at which time, it was necessary to move the building to the front of the lot. New foundations were laid and extensive repairs are being made to the building.

There is no accurate list obtainable of the Pastors who have served the church. Many of them served as supply pastors while serving as regular pastors in other churches of the Association. The present Pastor, Rev. William R. James, served as Sunday School Superintendent for 21 years, as deacon for many years, was licensed to preach May 17, 1947, and was ordained into the full time ministry, July 27, 1954. He has served as Pastor of the church since 1947.

BETHEL WELSH BAPTIST CHURCH

Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Prior to 1882, groups met in the home of Joseph Parry on Stanton Street, but in 1882, a group of 30 people met to worship God in a school house located on Parrish Street, near where the present church stands. The first members were originally members of the Welsh Baptist Church on Meade Street but due to the distance and difficulty of traveling, they formed a new church which was admitted into the Welsh Baptist Association in 1884. The church was organized in 1884, a lot purchased on the corner of Loomis and Parrish Streets, and church edifice erected.

It was remodelel and enlarged in 1902, with further improvements made in 1910 and 1911. Extensive alterations involving large expenditures were made in 1926. The mortgage for this work was burned on October 25, 1939, at a special service held for that purpose. A parsonage was purchased for use of the Pastor of the church, and in 1950 repairs were made to the church and to the parsonage. Again in 1954, a new heating plant was installed in the church.

The following Pastors have served the church: Revs. Edward Jenkins, W. Ogwenydd Evans, A. J. Morton, Henry H. Evans, D. C. Edwards, J. Dwight Roberts, James V. Lewis, Gomer Evans, G. Gordon Berry. The present Pastor, Milo D. Singer, began his ministry in April, 1950.

FIRST WELSH BAPTIST CHURCH

Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

It is believed that Welsh Baptists began to arrive in Wilkes-Barre in some numbers about the year 1865, but they were scattered throughout this section. As far as can be learned, Welsh Baptists held some preaching services at the First Baptist Church, then on Northampton Street, between Franklin and River Streets. Welsh preachers from surrounding neighborhoods conducted the preaching services, while week night services were held in the homes of the members.

In June, 1868, in Phoenix Hall, they organized themselves into a Welsh Baptist Church. The church continued to depend upon supply preachers until 1869 when the membership called the Rev. Theophilus Jones from Mahanoy City, he becoming their first regular Pastor. Their meetings had been held in various places: The school house on Rolling Mill Hill, in the Empire section, First Baptist Church, Phoenix and Sutton Halls on Public Square, and Williams' Hall on East Market Street. A permanent meeting house was erected on Sheridan Street, sometime in 1873, at an approximate cost of $7,500.00.

Work was begun on a new church, located on Meade Street, in 1888. It was finished in 1889, but before the new church could be completed, the old church on Sheridan Street was destroyed by fire. During the transitional period, the members worshipped in Jeremy Hall until work was completed on the new building. Dedicatory services for the new church edifice were held on August 17th, 18th, and 19th, 1889. Improvements have been made to the property through the years. A parsonage has been built as well as a home for the janitor. The entire church property is valued at $85,000.00.

The church has been served by the following Pastors: Revs. Theophilus Jones, Ebenezer Edwards, Sampson Jones, John T. Lloyd, W. J. John, Joseph M. Lloyd, Gomer Evans, W. R. Evans, James V. Lewis, Edward B. Wycoff, Daniel Wilson, E. D. Hettinger, Lloyd Williams, and Roland L. Miller. The present Pastor, Rev. Thomas A. Thomas, began his ministry, February 1, 1955.

PRESENT and FORMER MEMBER CHURCHES
of the
WELSH BAPTIST ASSOCIATION
of NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

CHURCH	Founded	Present Status
Alden	1884	Disbanded, 1888
Antrim	1873	Short-lived
Arnot	1874	Disbanded, 1895
Ashland	1857	Reading Association
Audenreid	1867	Disbanded, 1917
Beechwood	1886	Short-lived
Belmont	1853	Disbanded, 1876
Bloomsburg	1853	Short-lived
Blossburg	1853	Short-lived
Brisbin	1876	Disbanded, 1896 z
Broad Top	1857	Short-lived
Carbondale	1833	Disbanded, 1898
Centralia	1866	Short-lived
Danville	1848	Disbanded, 1910
Drifton	1878	Disbanded, 1890
Dudley	1863	Short-lived
Dunmore	1851	Short-lived
Dutchtown	1868	Short-lived
Eckley	1860	Short-lived
Edwardsville, Immanuel	1887	Wyoming Association
Edwardsville, Welsh	1873	Welsh Association
Forest City	1889	Disbanded, 1890
Freeland	1888	Disbanded, 1889
Frostburg, Md. Welsh Memorial	1868	Maryland Association
Gowen	1884	Disbanded, 1895
Johnstown, Memorial	1854	Western Penna. Association
Lansford	1878	Reading Association
Lee Park, Tabernacle	1897	Wyoming Association
Lindsey	1896	Disbanded, 1910
Mahanoy City, Zion	1864	Welsh Association
Mayfield	1875	Disbanded, 1910
Minersville	1835	Disbanded, 1920
Morris Run	1864	Disbanded, 1895
Mount Carmel	1872	Disbanded, 1888
Nanticoke, Nebo	1870	Wesh Association
Olyphant	1859	Wesh Association

CHURCH	Founded	Present Status
Pittston, Welsh	1851	Merged, Pittston, First, 1930
Plymouth, Welsh	1868	Welsh Association
Pottsville	1832	Disbanded, 1896
Saint Clair	1853	Disbanded, 1900
Scranton, First Welsh	1850	Abington Association
Scranton, Memorial	1864	Disbanded, 1931
Scranton, West Market	1864	Welsh Association
Shamokin	1883	Disbanded, 1885
Shenandoah	1867	Welsh Association
Slatington	1861	Reading Association
Spring Brook	1886	Disbanded, 1889
Summitt Hill	1850	Disbanded, 1918
Taylor	1869	Welsh Association
Upper Lehigh	1867	Disbanded, 1889
Wanamie	1870	Disbanded, 1878
Warrior Run	1864	Welsh Association
Wisconisco	1868	Harrisburg Association
Wilkes-Barre, Bethel	1884	Welsh Association
Wilkes-Barre, First Welsh	1868	Welsh Association
Wilkes-Barre, Parsons	1870	Welsh Association

The Welsh Baptists In America -- An Evaluation

The occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the formation of the Welsh Baptist Association of Northeastern Pennsylvania seems an auspicious time to review briefly the role played by Welshmen in furthering the Baptist cause in the United States. A strongly religious people, imbued with a love of democracy and the right of freedom of conscience, the Welsh welcomed the appearance of the new varieties of Christian dissent which made their appearance in Britain in the seventeenth century. The Baptist faith, in particular, gained many early converts among them, and soon a flourishing Baptist movement led by capable leaders made strong headway among the Welsh people. Persecuted fiercely by the leaders of the established Church, many Welsh Baptists suffered the indignities and degradations of an intolerant age rather than give up their newly found faith. Others fled from persecution to come to the new world in the hope of worshipping unmolested.

1899072

Among those who fled the religious intolerance of the homeland was the Reverend John Myles, considered by many to be the founder of the Baptist faith in Wales. Accompanied by the members of the little congregation which he had founded at Ilston near Swansea, Myles sought haven in Plymouth Colony in 1663. Here not far from the Rhode Island boundry line he re-established his church and named the new settlement Swansea in honor of the Welsh town from which most of his little group had come. His church became the mother church to many daughter congregations. It is still in existence and rates as one of the oldest Baptist churches in America. It would seem that the coming of Myles and his group marked the first apearance of Welsh Baptists in America.

Still later in the century, many Welsh immigrants were attracted by the liberal terms offered by the great William Penn in order to gain settlers for his new colony of Pennsylvania. Dissatisfaction with the religious and economic conditions at home led many Welsh Baptists to take advantage of his offers. They came to Pennsylvania to settle in Philadelphia and the surrounding country. From the very beginning these Welsh Baptists, both ministers and laymen, played a vital role in establishing the Baptist faith in the middle colonies. Indeed, the historians of the Philadelphia Baptist Association (which when it was founded in 1707 was the mother Baptist group for the middle colonies) give full praise and credit to the Welsh Baptists in this early pioneering work by stating in their history that "the Philadelphia Association originated with churches planted by members from Wales".

Some seven early Baptist churches of the Philadelphia area were founded by Welsh immigrants. Many others were organized with the aid of Welsh Baptist ministers, and undoubtedly included Welshmen among the members of their congregations. Included among the churches founded by Welsh immigrants was historic Pennepek Church, mother church of the Baptist churches of the middle colonies. It dates from the coming of a group of Welsh Baptist immigrants in 1683 who joined with others to found the church in January, 1688. Two of the Welsh immigrants, Samuel Jones and Evan Morgan, served as co-pastors, while the old Welsh Bible which they brought with them from Wales continued to be used in the church well into the eighteenth century.

Other churches founded by Welsh Immigrants included the Tredyffrin or Great Valley church, 1711; the Brandywine church, 1715; the Montgomery church, 1719; the Tulpohoken church of Berks County, 1738; and the First Baptist church of Philadelphia, 1745. There had always been a strong Welsh element among the Baptists of Philadelphia. They worshipped together as a city branch of the Pennepek church for many years. When they set themselves up as a separate church, they chose as their first pastor, Jenkin Jones, a Welsh immigrant preacher.

Two other historic colonial Baptist churches were founded by Welsh immigrants. The first was the noted Welsh Tract or "emigrating church" of Iron Hill near Newark, Delaware. It dates from 1701 when a group of Baptists from Pembrokenshire and Carmarthenshire organized themselves into a church and made the trip across the Atlantic as a "church emigrant". They settled at first among their Welsh Baptist brethren at Pennepek but eventually located in the Delaware Welsh Tract in 1703. The beautiful permanent little edifice which they erected in 1746, enclosed by its small cemetery, is considered today to be one of Delaware's historic monuments.

The other historic church was established by Welsh Baptist Immigrants from Delaware attracted to the Peedee River region of South Carolina then being opened up to settlement. Long known as the Welsh Neck church, it was founded in 1738 and became the mother church to some thirty-eight Baptist churches in South Carolina. It still survives today.

An array of Welsh ministers did valient work in promoting the Baptist cause in America during the colonial period, chiefly in the Philadelphia area. Such men as Evan Morgan, Samuel Jones, Nathaniel Jenkins, Thomas Griffiths, Elisa Thomas, and Hugh Davis, to mention a few, not only ministered to their own Welsh congregations, but made frequent missionary tours, aided in the setting up of new churches, wrote and dis-

seminated tracts and other types of literature, and played the role of Baptist patriarchs generally in Philadelphia and the surrounding country. Not to be forgotten, too, were Welsh Baptist leaders who rate among our country's leading colonial religious figures: Abel Morgan, Senior, the noted devine who produced Cyd-goriad Egwyddorawl o'r Scrythurau, the first Welsh Concordance of the Bible, published in Philadelphia in 1730; Abel Morgan, Junior, founder of Fogg's Manor Academy, the first Baptist educational institution in America; Benjamin Griffiths, renowned scholar and first historian of the American Baptists; Morgan Edwards, scholar, historian, and one of the founders of Brown University; and David Jones, missionary to the Indians and perhaps the most famous chaplain of the American Revolutionary armies.

In the Post-Revolutionary period, Welsh immigration set in again and included many devoted to Baptists beliefs. One such was the noted Reverend Morgan John Rhees, ardent liberal, democrat, and champion of the rights of man. Hounded out of his native Wales, he came to America in 1794 and three years later founded the little Welsh Baptist community of Beulah in Cambria County, western Pennsylvania. The church that he founded in 1797 is now the Ebensburg Baptist church, one of the oldest, if not the oldest Baptist church to be established in the newly developing western frontier.

Small Welsh agricultural communities soon grew up in Oneida County, New York, and in the Ohio country generally. Baptists were among these early settlers and were responsible for the founding of Welsh Baptist churches at Utica in 1801 and at Bordwell near Remsan in 1809, both in Oneida County, New York; at Welsh Hills near Granville, Ohio, in 1808; and at Radnor, Ohio, in 1816.

It was not, however, until the decade of the 1840's, that Welsh emigration to America assumed serious proportions. Then it was that bad times at home plus the agricultural and industrial opportunities offered by America combined to attract Welsh settlers to America. From the 1840's onwards, thousands came yearly to America: some to take up farms in the newly developing west, many more to seek employment in and to contribute their skilled labor to the iron, steel, anthracite, and bituminous coal industries. Pennsylvania and Ohio attracted the greatest majority, and these two states still rate today as the greatest centers of Welsh Settlement. Thousands of Welsh Baptists joined in the vast migration, and soon a score and more of small Baptist chapels could be found among the respective Welsh settlements. A total of some one hundred and seventy-two such were established, the overwhelming majority in the Pennsylvania anthracite mining fields, the home of the Association whose centennial year we are now celebrating.

Love of worship in the mother tongue was ever dear to the Welshman. It was but natural that love of mother tongue and their common cultural traditions should bind together the various Welsh communities established in America. It was but natural, too, that this cultural unity should result in a type of religious unity among the respective Welsh creeds. Through such unity came spiritual strength so greatly needed to face the many problems besetting these foreign-language speakers in their new environment. To the extent that church polity and traditions would permit, such unity was attempted, and the Welsh Baptists played an active role in molding such organizations.

Five associations, called gymanfas by the Welsh, were formed by the Welsh Baptists in the nineteenth century. These linked together in a loose union the churches of a given geographical district. The first and oldest, the New York or Oneida Gymanfa, was organized in the 1830's; the Ohio and Western Pennsylvania Gymanfa in 1839; the Wisconsin Gymanfa in the 1860's; the Trans-Mississippi Gymanfa in the 1870's; and the Eastern Pennsylvania Gymanfa, the only one still in existence, in 1855.

The gymanfa was at first merely a preaching festival held annually at a given church and attended by representatives of the various Welsh Baptist churches of a given geographical area. At such festivals, preachers vied with each other to instill the truths of Christianity within the hearts of their listeners and to encourage them to live lives of Christian righteousness. Interspersed between sermons would take place marvelous group singing of that beauty and ardor for which the Welsh people have acquired a world-wide reputation. At the end of the festival, all would return to their homes, immeasurably strengthened spiritually.

In time, however, the gymanfa became a business session devoted to the interests of the denomination. To the extent that Baptist church polity would permit, certain problems common to all the churches would be considered. Gymanfa sessions rotated annually among the member churches, serving the purpose of reinvigorating Baptist Christian enthusiasm as well as serving as a convenient arena where problems of general interest to all the congregations could be threshed out so that recommendations could be taken home to the respective churches. Strong stands in support of the abolition of slavery and on behalf of temperance were taken at these meetings; recommendations that careful screening be given the numerous preachers who came over from the homeland to weed out the unfit were made; enthusiastic support of the home and foreign missionary activities of the Northern Baptist Convention was given; and a host of problems concerning ways to increase church attendance,

add new members, and the like, were considered. Beyond this point the gymanfa never went, leaving the individual congregations complete freedom to follow its recommendations or not. In the case of the Eastern Pennsylvania Gymanfa, however, a closer type of unity developed eventually.

Association through the gymanfas unified the Welsh Baptists, and this unity was supplemented by the good work rendered by the various Welsh Baptist periodicals which eventually made their appearance on the American scene. Seven such, six in the Welsh language, flourished over a period of years. Four had brief careers, but three rendered valiant service to the Baptist cause in America. Y Seren Orllewinol (The Western Star) was founded by the Reverend W. T. Phillips in 1844. Published at first at Utica, it was later edited by the Reverend John T. Harries of Minersville and published at Pottsville. It enjoyed a twenty-three year career and last appeared in 1867. Y Glorian (The Balance), edited by Reverends W. L. Evans, D. J. Nicholas, and G. Aubrey, was first published at Pittsburgh in 1872, then later at Youngstown. It enjoyed a twenty-two year career and was last published in 1894. Best known of all was Y Wawr Americanaidd (The American Dawn) edited and published by the noted Reverend Owen Griffiths (Giraldus) in New York City. It first appeared in 1876 and continued to be published for twenty years until the death of Griffiths in 1896. All three periodicals were monthlies. They contained selected sermons; comments on Sunday School activities and problems; reports on the respective gymanfas; columns of deaths, births, and marriages; poetry; and articles of general interest. Copies of these magazines were to be found in the homes of most of the Welsh Baptists. The profound influence exerted by these little journals upon the Welsh-speaking Baptists can well be imagined.

Very few of the Welsh Baptist ministers were college trained men. Even if they had been, it is doubtful whether many of the little chapels could have afforded to hire them. Most of the preachers were well-informed men having obtained their knowledge through self-discipline, diligent application, and the hard school of experience generally. Many worked side by side with their parishioners in the coal mines. Upon obtaining sufficient background in theology and a knowledge of the Welsh Bible and the Welsh Commentaries, they presented themselves to their fellow Baptists as candidates for ordination. In due time and after serving as student preachers they were examined carefully by a special committee composed of both lay and clerical representatives. If found worthy they were then ordained. As the years went by a general awareness of the need for more formally trained clergymen became felt. Interest in

collecting funds to send worthy applicants to the seminary became general. To the extent that funds would permit, every effort was made to obtain formally trained ministers. Many of the churches still rely, however, upon the old fashioned preacher, self-educated in theology and religion, but well-informed and well-equipped to handle the problems of human nature and human relationships.

With the passing of the years, the process of Americanization as well as changing conditions within th coal fields, greatly affected the Welsh Baptist churches. As the older immigrant generation passed from the scene and a new vigorous English-speaking crop of youngsters took its place, demands that services be held in English became increasingly insistent. In some cases, the Welsh oldsters, ever loyal to their mother tongue, refused to make this concession. Secession from the Welsh church followed, with the younger element setting up a new daughter church, English in services. Particularly was this true of the Pennsylvania coal fields. It was not long, however, before the wisdom of introducing English was realized. One after another the Welsh Baptist churches did so, at first holding services in both languages, then gradually restricting the Welsh services, and finally abandoning them completely. By the decade of the 1920's practically all were English in services, although the dearly beloved Welsh hymns were retained and are still sung today.

The process of Americanization led, too, in some cases to merger of Welsh churches with stronger neighboring Baptist churches, English in services, or the secession of some churches from the Welsh gymanfas and their affiliation with English-speaking associations. This tendency, plus the bad economic conditions that beset certain of the mining districts which caused the Welsh miners to seek work elsewhere, accounts for the disappearance of many of the Welsh Baptist churches established during the nineteenth century. Of the one hundred and twenty-two of Welsh foundation, only thirty-three survive today, twenty-seven located significantly in Pennsylvania.

Americanization sounded the deathknell for the Welsh Baptist gymanfas, too. One by one they disappeared from the scene. We hear nothing more of the Trans-Mississippi after 1888; of the Wisconsin after 1890; of New York after 1897. Ohio and Western Pennsylvania disbanded in 1920, its churches joining other associations. Only the Northeastern Pennsylvania survives today, now completely English in speech, but ever loyal to its old Welsh traditions.

This was but a natural and desirable evolution and one duplicated in time by all the other ethnic groups which settled in America. Before the

eventual transformation, however, the Welsh Baptist clergy, laity, and churches had played an important role and had played it well. In some cases they introduced the Baptist faith for the first time into areas heretofore unfamiliar with Baptist principles. In other instances, they reinforced and invigorated the Baptist cause through their coming. In the case of northeastern Pennsylvania, the Welsh were responsible for making the Baptist faith one of the important Prostestant creeds of the region. Numbers of their young men went forth from their churches to enter the Christian ministry and to labor at home and abroad. To the extent that their economic circumstances would permit, the Welsh Baptists congregations enthusiastically supported the good work being done by the various agencies of the Northern Baptist Convention.

From their first appearance upon the American scene, the Welsh Baptists rendered enthusiastic support to the Baptist cause. This they continued to do over the years. Their enthusiasm they handed down to their descendants, who carry on today in the fine spirit of their immigrant ancestors. Now as their last remaining gymanfa celebrates its one-hundredth birthday, surely Baptists everywhere—indeed, members of other creeds, too—will join with the writer in rendering great praise and heartiest congratulations to a valiant group of people who are the bearers of a fine tradition and who still labor so nobly to further the Christian way of life.

Thomas W. Thom

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PAYNE PRINTERY, Plymouth, Pa.